

SIMONE GIBERTONI

THE PATH TO

PERSONAL

EXCELLENCE

WHAT MATTERS
IS NOT WHERE
YOU START FROM
BUT WHERE
YOU WANT TO GO

*To all the people I worked with.
Especially the great ones.*

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Foreword

I have been lucky in my life as consultant to have had the opportunity to meet dozens of very successful entrepreneurs and managers from whom I have learned a great deal. As executive and manager of a multinational firm I have had the opportunity to have an exceptional “mentor”, the company’s founder, a great entrepreneur who has taught me how to do “real” business, not merely that of pure management of multinationals but that of creating enterprise, an ever rarer occupation that is becoming more and more and difficult to find.

All this mixed with the great passion of my life. Personal development and management, that have led me to read over 400 books on the topic, studying everything, and always trying to understand what the difference is that makes the difference. In this book I have tried to focus on the principles of personal success, leaving aside, for now, the principles concerning company management. But what I have written here are in reality the basics, to have success both as a person and also as a professional. They are indeed the secrets that can make a difference in your life and also the foundations to become excellent professionals.

I have deliberately tried to be concise; I have gone, as one is accustomed to saying, to the “heart” of the principles of success. In today’s world we don’t have any time at all for anything that is not essential. Not only, I wanted this book to be a practical guide, full of exercises, schemes and suggestions that you can apply straight away.

This book has been planned as a walk. I recommend you read the whole book, following the suitable order, and then to return to each “step” devoting deeper thought to it. In this second phase you can also widen the part of the exercises up to truly creating a complete

map of what you want your life to become.

There are many exercises that are rich in content, but they are an essential part of the process of change. Do them.

If you are able to apply the “steps” that you are about to learn in this book, you won’t be able to help changing your life drastically. You will see results right from the start, and others will see you as a different person.

Go on working intensely on each “step”, try to apply them in the best way to your lives, take what works for you and get rid of what doesn’t work, don’t be afraid to experiment.

As H.D. Thoreau said: things do not change, we change.

Bon voyage!

Simone Gibertoni, Clarens, November 2013

PS: why 40 steps? In Christian tradition they are necessary for change, for resurrection.... for a new life...

Start with the end in mind

*I am not a product of my circumstances.
I am a product of my decisions.*

Stephen R. Covey

“Start with the end in mind...”

The great Stephen Covey left us this important “inheritance” and what better way to start a book than “having the end in mind”?

But what does it mean? It means being able to examine our decisions and our behaviour as a whole. Beginning everything with our final goals, our destination, clear in our minds.

If you are not able to have this perspective it is very likely that the decisions that you take are motivated by the “next 5 minutes”, that is by the very short-term consequences.

For sure one mustn't forget short-term consequences, but the best thing is to apply the 5-5-5-50 rule.

Assess every decision in the context of its possible consequences in the next 5 minutes, 5 months, 5 years and 50 years...

First and foremost this allows us to “see” the consequences of every decision we make in our mind and then to act. But “starting with the end in mind” also means having our deepest values, our mission and our objectives clear.

Defining all these things is exactly what we will be doing on the

following pages of this book... We will define our personal vision, we will define our values and the main objectives that we wish to reach in every sphere of our life.

Acting and taking decisions in this way allows us to not be at the mercy of events, moods and contingent situations, but instead to have a "barycentre" within us that guides us, a mental "compass" that allows us to be coherent with ourselves every day.

Take on your responsibility

The price of greatness is responsibility.

Winston Churchill

You alone are responsible.

I can help you along the road, but not to choose your road.

Take on your responsibility. Take on your responsibility. Take on your responsibility. Take on your responsibility.

One day I will write a book just repeating these four words. Why? Because if you take on responsibility, you are already at a good point on the journey that will lead you to a fuller life.

Responsibility for what? You ask. For everything, full stop. Is it true that everything that happens to you can be influenced by you? No, but it's a good way to see things.

If you were playing a game of tennis where victory, however the game went, depended on someone else's decision, would you play your game in any case? I WOULDN'T! Or perhaps you would play all the same, but with no effort... because in any case... victory wouldn't depend on you...

Life is the same: if you think that your success, your happiness, your relations depend on:

- your family who shouldn't have made you study medicine;
- your colleagues who only think of getting themselves noticed by their bosses;
- that bastard of a chief who doesn't let you spend time surfing the internet...

well, if you think that your success, or rather INsuccess, is all THEIR fault... then, my friend, I'm sorry to have to tell you... **you won't get far.**

The moment in which you let someone else fix your goals in life for you, you are not taking on your responsibility. You are giving someone else the task of guiding your life.

The "steps" in this book will let you add horse power to your life's engine so that you can reach what you want quicker, they do not serve to tell you which road you have to take.

You alone are the driver of your life.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are the areas of your life that you are not satisfied with and blame someone else for?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Which are the areas of your life that you feel aren't "under your control"?

Define, concerning these areas, 3 things that you can do RIGHT AWAY to improve your situation.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Look for novelty and explore your limits

Only a search for the impossible can lead to what can be done.

Anonymous

Each of us has a comfort zone, big or small, shallow or deep. Each of us has things we can do, things we know (more or less well), places we love to visit, sports we love to play, languages that we can speak, books we love to read.

Each of us is by nature a creature of habit (anyone who isn't has only understood that he has to apply this rule to grow); **it is much easier to do the same things, to meet the same people, to go on holiday in the same resorts where we were, perhaps, treated well, rather than changing.** Who makes us do so?

Why should we have to meet new people...have to take a road that we don't know to go to a new place that isn't "familiar". Why should we read a book that isn't the same kind of book of adventures that we have been reading every summer since we were 18 years old? Examples of this type could go on forever.

The answer is that the only way to grow, to evolve, to taste the beauty of life is to come out of our comfort zone, from what we already know how to do in order to try something that we don't know how to do.

If I eat what I have always eaten, who says that there can't be something even better? If I go to the places that I have always been to, who says that there are no travel experiences better than those that I have always had?

“But who says that they are not worse?” you will say. No one. That is why you have to explore novelty, explore your limits and not be afraid of fear but face it, because this is the only way to overcome it.

There is no growth without change and there is no change that does not require a small effort.

The most interesting people that I have ever met are those that have been around the world, who have seen cultures different to their own, who have not been afraid of something new and different, and who put themselves on the line... Remember:

he who does not improve does not stay still... every day is a small step backwards.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are the areas of your life that you are afraid to change?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

From tomorrow, take a small risk every day, risk doing something different from the day before every day, something new that you wouldn't have done before... break down the barriers that you have created!

Define your personal mission

*Every person above the ordinary
has a certain mission that they are
called to fulfil.*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Companies create a vision and a mission: “plans” for the future, which serve to inspire people and point them in a shared direction.

However, often the mission and the vision seem false and are not followed. The reason is very simple; they are not anchored to the deepest values that brought the very same company to life.

Even at a personal level, defining your own mission, which is founded on your deepest values, is an essential step toward success.

A well thought out mission must give a direction, it must instill passion and it must give a meaning to your life.

All successful people, even if they have not made a rational process of definition of their mission, have one that pushes them beyond the limit, motivates them and keeps them in line with their objectives always.

Indeed, objectives are nothing but a declination of your mission. They derive from your mission. They are the direct consequence. They will be easy to reach only if they are aligned with your mission (which in turn must be aligned with your values).

DIARY OF CHANGE

Define your personal vision. To do this answer these questions:

What were the moments in which you felt completely fulfilled?

In what situations did you feel truly happy? What were you doing?

1

2

3

If you go over these moments in your mind, what do they have in common?

What is important for you when you have relationships with other people?

What do you think is most important for yourself?

What is the sense of your life?

What is it that fulfils you?

What would you like to be remembered for?

Good, now, reading through all the replies that you have given above, complete this sentence: my mission in life is:

Make sure that your mission is in the present, that it is not too vague and that it is inspiring. Rewrite it until you feel that it is yours, not only rationally but also emotionally. Ensure that your mission reflects the answers that you gave to the questions above, that is, that it contemplates the action towards that things that fulfil you and make you happy, that connect you to others and to yourself and make the world a better place.

Here is an example of a personal mission that might be useful to you as an example.

“my mission in life is to use my time best to fulfil my dreams, to express myself and my uniqueness through the creation of products, services and exceptional work that can make a positive difference to the lives of others.”

Divide your life into “areas of power”

*All successful people are big dreamers.
They imagine what their future could be,
ideal in every respect and then they
work every day toward their distant vision,
that goal or purpose.*

Brian Tracy

Our life is not made up of water tight compartments. In reality we cannot completely separate for instance work from our private life, but at the same time we must make sure that our life is **balanced**. For this reason, when we define our objectives it's a good idea to define them within what I like to define as “areas of power” i.e. areas in which we can best decide what we want and define it in a clear way, but above all, as I said before, balanced. My suggestion is that of defining 8 areas of power:

Body/Health and Vitality: in this area come all the objectives that concern physical health, physical exercise, and the way we eat and take care of our body.

Family: in this area come all the objectives that concern the “close circle” of relations, children, parents, your companion and such dear friends that you would call them “part of your family”.

Material assets: This area concerns the objectives which concern the things we own and the lifestyle we wish to lead. It concerns our home and the place we live in, our clothes, our cars and the things we want to possess.

Personal development: in this area come all the objectives of intellectual and personal growth, such as learning a new language, the books we'd like to read and the “practical” things that we want to learn, such as playing an instrument for instance.

Social life, friends and leisure: in this category come all the objectives of relations with others, of leisure, joy and distraction.

Work/Career: here you must insert the objectives that regard the job that you would like to do, the satisfaction that you want to reach, the retribution and the responsibility that you want.

Finances & Investments: here come all the objectives relative to your "financial position", investments, savings, and future financial planning.

Contribution to the world: in this area come all the objectives in which you "open up to the world" and wonder how you can contribute to making the world a better place. In this area come also your spiritual objectives.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Imagine you have to give an assessment of your "current situation" in each of your areas of power, from 1 to 10.

Write 1 if your situation is very negative and 10 if it is absolutely positive.

Now ask yourself: are they all above sufficient? Are they too "unbalanced"? For instance are some given 8 and others only a 3?

Which are the areas of power on which you need to focus more to bring back balance to your life? The priority areas of power on which I have to work are:

1

2

3

Make a clear plan for your future

A goal is a dream with a deadline.

Napoleon Hill

What do I want my life to be like in 5 years' time?

This is the key question that you have to answer.

And you have to answer in detail, in all the "areas of power" that we defined before.

So... what level of health would you like to have? How would you like to be physically? What would you like to look like? Where would you like to live? In what sort of house? Who with? What will your day be like? Who will your friends be? What will your job be? What will your finances be like? How would you like to contribute to improving the world? What holidays would you like to take? Where? When? How many?

Sometimes it's difficult to answer these questions... our brain is too used to setting limits.

You can start the exercise with a question that will help you to "paint" your future in your mind:

"If **today** I had already reached all my objectives, what would I be doing? What would my day be like?"

This question will help you to truly understand where your heart would take you if it didn't have those self-imposed limits.

DIARY OF CHANGE

In 30 seconds define your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years.

1

2

3

Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Body/
Health and Vitality area of power:

1

2

3

Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Family
area of power:

1

2

3

Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Material Assets area of power:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Personal development area of power:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Social life, friends and leisure area of power:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

**Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Work/
Career area of power:**

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

**Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the Finances
& Investments area of power:**

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

**Now your 3 priority objectives in the next 5 years in the
Contribution to the world area of power:**

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Learn to say NO

*Liberty, when it begins to take root,
is a plant of rapid growth.*

George Washington

How many times in a day do we stop, faced with a decision or a request from someone, and ask ourselves “what if I didn’t do it?”

Few, too few.

We live in a world that Alvin Toffler defined as one of hyperchoice and we don’t know how to say NO.

But why? Simple. Because saying yes is always, in the very short term, the easiest choice.

Faced with many choices, saying “yes” to the requests from others is the easiest route. Furthermore, as we will see for emotional blackmail, the need to please others is often so strong that it leads us to putting our happiness in second place. Finally, when someone makes a request to us, we always have a doubt: “whether saying no I would lose something? ”

But saying no is crucial to living happily and having success.

Also in this case we can distinguish the activities that we do driven by a sense of guilt, the activities that we do because “everyone would” and the activities **guided instead by objectives** (and by desire).

This is why to know how to say NO, we must have our objectives very clear.

Use a simple rule. If a request that is made, a choice that you have to make, does not bring a truly strong wish to say YES, and it is not aligned with your objectives and values, leave it be.

This is what William Ury writes in his book "The positive NO":

"A positive NO can be likened to a tree. The trunk is like your NO: straight and strong. But just as the trunk is only the middle part of a tree, so your NO is only the middle part of a positive NO. The roots from which the trunk emerges are your first YES... to the deepest interests that support you. The branches and the leaves... are your second YES... the fruit is the positive outcome that you are looking for"

DIARY OF CHANGE

Next time that you are asked to do something, assess the long-term consequences of a YES or a NO and don't ask yourself: "What will I lose if I say NO", but rather, "What do I want for myself?"

Use this 3-phase process to say NO:

- 1. Clarify your objectives;**
- 2. Create a positive alternative;**
- 3. Say your "NO" and propose your positive alternative, your YES.**

How much do you love what you do?

*Passion dyes all that it touches
with its own colours.*

Baltasar Gracián

Our subconscious has enormous power; it is the submerged part of an iceberg that can help us to solve the most difficult problems, guide us toward our objectives and help us to find the most creative solutions.

But our subconscious is activated only if we have strong motivation for what we are doing, only if we are truly INTERESTED in what we are doing. Only if we have PASSION.

Take the thing that you love most in your life. It could be your children, your companion or your parents.

Now give them a score from 1 to 10 in terms of interest for you... most likely you will have given you choice a score of 10. Good, now take for example your work, and, honestly, give it a score from 1 to 10. If your assessment is less than 8, you will not manage to have the subconscious drive that will allow you to have TRUE success. You are not motivated enough. You will not be energetic enough.

And you will not be happy enough.

Happiness is closely linked to the interest and passion that we put into the things that we do.

If you spend most of the day doing things that don't interest you, you are dead for most of your time.

As Richard Koch suggests, identify the things that for you have an

How can you increase the time that you dedicate to them every day or even make them your one and only job? Define for each area at least 5 possible actions that you can undertake right away.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Define an action plan to put the 3 things that you feel the most passionate about at the centre of your life.

Don't accept anything less than perfection

*Go on with what you have started
and perhaps you will reach the
peak, or at least you will reach a
point that only you will know is not the peak.*

Seneca

Everyone speaks about Steve Jobs today as the perfect entrepreneur, the revolutionary innovator, the man able to “change” the rules of the game.

And this is all true. Apple has truly changed our lives... in 2013 Apple overtook Coca-Cola as the highest value brand in the world.

Steve Jobs was known as being a perfectionist, a man who didn't accept compromises to his vision, ready for anything in order to drive his collaborators towards perfection.

Jobs had the same interior drive that the great artists have: **a desire stronger than any other thing to see their vision created.**

That is why he was said to be “arrogant”, “perfectionist” and that is why he asked for more and more from himself and from his collaborators.

We know that perfection doesn't exist, and we know that being too much of a perfectionist often leads to a continual dissatisfaction... but are we sure that this is negative? All the successful people that I have met knew how to be satisfied with and proud of what they had created, **but at the same time dissatisfied and in search of something better.**

And above all they were not ready to accept mediocrity in others, but especially in themselves.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are the different areas of your life (sport, finances, work) in which you could do better, but that you put up with?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Decide, from today, not to accept any compromises compared to the goals that you have set yourself. Strive always for perfection in what you do, in each of the activities that you carry out every day. Aim for the best for yourself and push others to do their best. Set an example.

Visualize your better future

*To accomplish great things we must first dream,
then visualise, then plan... believe... act!*

Alfred Montapert

After defining what you really want and after ensuring that what you want will allow you to balance all the aspects of your life in the way that adapts best to your concept of "fullness", you will have created your desired future "on paper", but...

Defining your objectives and trying to reach them is not enough. Writing your objectives is not enough.

Planning the steps to be taken to reach them is not enough.

The next step that you have to take is that of visualising **them** in your mind, i.e. visualise yourself while you are living the life that you wish to live, you are doing the things that you wish to do, you are surrounded by the people that you wish to have relationships with, you own the things that you would like to own.

Visualizing all of this is not easy... at first your mind will have difficulty in doing it, but we can ALL visualize.

Our brain works largely with images.

Compared to our imaginative modality, our linguistic modality is a small sector of conscious production (but we think the contrary).

The psychosomatic effects of visualization techniques are based on this fundamental characteristic of the functioning of the brain: **they**

adopt the main system of cerebral functioning which is the one using images.

Visualization allows you to impress your objectives on your subconscious mind. Some say that all that is true for the subconscious happens in life. I don't know whether this is true, but it's nice to think so. Certainly if you start to visualize, you will find that everything becomes easier for you. Visualization is a very powerful tool and is often used by athletes and by sports psychologists.

All those who reach great results in their lives have the ability to use their mind to visualize their own desired future.

This, obviously, means that they have a clear vision of where they want to reach, how, and why they want to get there. Several studies have shown that the results that can be obtained in motor skills and in change of cerebral plasticity through visualisation are very similar to the changes that are obtained with effective practice.

Every day, therefore, we must dedicate time to visualisation of the behaviours that we want to bring into being, of the objectives that we want to reach, of how we want to live our life. I will repeat it many times in this book, because this is an essential theme for success.

To visualise first and foremost it is necessary to create a film of our desired future and edit it so that it is perfect. Then we have to see our film in our mind over and over again.

After having created our film we have to become its protagonists. We mustn't just watch the film as if we were at the cinema, but we have to "enter inside" and see in front of us what we would see if we

really were the protagonists, hear what we would hear and feel all the sensations that we would feel if we were the actors in our film in first person.

It is important to visualise early in the morning, perhaps right after meditating, or in the evening before going to sleep. In the evening it might be useful to imagine reliving the day but always adopting in all the situations the behaviors which, a posteriori, we deem it would have been perfect to adopt in that particular situation.

Little by little, your imaginary life will become your real life...

DIARY OF CHANGE

Going back to your objectives in the different areas of power, write how you would like your ideal day to be, write what you would like to do from the morning as soon as you get up to the evening when you go to bed, write it all down in detail, the sensations that you feel, the people that you meet, the work that you do, the car that you drive, the family that you have, the house where you live... describe it all in the most vivid way possible. Then once you have written it, imagine it constantly in your mind, like a great colour film in which you are the main actor.

Live the day as the best person that you can be

Art is life and life is art.

Carl William Brown

Starting from today, decide that you will live the day constantly focussing on the best person that you can be in every situation. Show your interior strength at all times, forge your character with the will to be the best every day, or in any case every day better. Challenge yourself every day.

Control your character in every relationship, in every action, in every situation.

Always ask yourself if the way in which you behave truly reflects the person that you want to be.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are the situations in which you are overwhelmed by events, in which you lose control? Do they bring you closer to or farther from the objectives that you want to reach in the specific situation and generally in your life?

Decide the three best adjectives that are to represent you today and live making sure that these adjectives are really reflected in you.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Decide the three ways that you want to treat people, and live so that you follow them.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Do it always, on every occasion. Train yourself.

Ask yourself the right questions

Judge a man by his questions rather than by his answers

Voltaire

The problem is never having the right answers, but asking yourself the right questions! The capacity that you have to face life with the right questions, will lead you in a natural way to find the right answers.

You have imagined your ideal future; you have defined objectives in each of your "areas of power". Now the key question is:

HOW?

How can I reach my objectives?

How can I arrive at my ideal life?

How can I overcome the problems that I will inevitably have to tackle?

How? How? How?

Discipline yourself to give at least 20 answers to the question "how" for each of your objectives and you will have very good chances of already being half way there (but don't forget to act!).

The wrong questions, moreover, can likewise easily lead us to living the life that **we don't want**.

Ask yourselves: "Why am I so unlucky?" or "Why aren't I rich?" or "Why haven't I got 10 million euros in the bank?"

You can be sure that your brain will know how to find the “right” answer also in this case.

But this is the reality of life for most mediocre people!!!

They don’t ask themselves: *“What can I do to improve my position?”*.
Do you want to know why?

Because asking yourself the right questions implies ACTION.

And most people don’t want to act. They don’t want to pay the price in terms of concentration, effort or risks to make their dreams come true.

Once again it’s necessary to learn to take responsibility for your own actions. Asking yourself the **wrong questions** means giving someone else that responsibility. **Asking yourself the right questions** means acting and taking the responsibility of the answers.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are your objectives, the problems that you want to solve, the things that you want to improve and on which, today, you can ask yourself HOW?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Give at least 20 replies to this question. Having done that, take the 3 most important answers and act NOW.

Get into the habit of transforming every difficulty, problem or instead, objective, into a bolstering question that will HELP YOU TO ACT.

Apply the deathbed mentality

A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.

Mark Twain

In his book 'The monk who sold his Ferrari' Robin Sharma speaks about the deathbed mentality. A concept that, although it may seem a little macabre, is in reality able to provoke dramatic and substantial changes in your life. It means a lot getting up every morning and wondering: "What would I do if this were the last day of my life?"

How would I treat my family, my colleagues or strangers? **This mentality will also serve to live according to the right priorities.** How could you not give yourself priorities in the things to be done if you knew that you would only live one day?

If we were proposed something new and adventurous, something that would have frightened us under 'normal' conditions, would we be differently motivated if we knew that it was our last chance to try out that experience?

Would we feel tired?

Would we sleep 10 hours if we only had 24 hours of life left?

Would we watch television for 3 hours in the evening?

I know that it's not easy to adopt this point of view every day, but try and you'll see what huge changes it may bring about in you. Put yourselves in this state of mind in the morning when you start the day, but also when you have to take a difficult decision or when you have doubts about the priorities in your life. Moreover, this mentality will

help you to **live in the present**. How many times have we heard people saying how important it is to live in the present? But when have we truly done so? How many times have we been transported instead by beautiful or ugly thoughts from our past or from an uncertain future that have diverted us from living the present moment? If you are able to project yourselves into a future time of a maximum of 24 hours, you will not have time for regrets, remorse or worries about the future.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Imagine being able to assist at your funeral.

What are the three adjectives that you would like the people who knew you to use for you during the commemoration?

1

2

3

Manage your time

It is better to do the smallest thing in the world rather than to hold half an hour to be too small a thing.

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

A huge number of books have been written about time management. In reality the principles to apply are few and simple. Let's take a look at them together:

1. Make decisions on how to use your time basing yourself on your objectives and your priorities. Concentrate therefore on what is **IMPORTANT**, not on what is **URGENT**.
2. Plan in advance. That means: **plan the time for planning**. Planning of the week must become your key-planning. Take your different "areas of power", define your objectives for each role and **plan them** in the week. After planning the week pass on to daily planning. Ask yourself: "What is the thing that I can do this week and on this day to have the greatest impact in every "area of power?"
3. Define your priorities every day and first work on those.
4. **Synergise** i.e. put together objectives in the different roles so as to get more with less time: for instance do sport with your children, if your objective of the week as a parent is to spend more time with your children and your objective as a sportsman is to go running for 1 hour. Synergy will allow you to save a lot of time.
5. Every time that you have to begin an activity, ask yourself: **how can I best use my time now?** Then act accordingly.
6. Visualise your day before living it, and take stock of your day in the evening. Learn from your mistakes.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Put everything down in writing; create a unique and coherent instrument. You can do it with electronic devices or with a diary. But everything must be written down: your vision, your areas of power, your objectives, your planning and your weekly and daily priorities.

Fix limits

The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.

Albert Einstein

There is something very energising in clearly defining certain insurmountable limits that no one can overtake. This means that there is a part of us that we respect so much that no one can in any way offend, dominate or humiliate.

Have you asked yourself and clearly defined the limits that you absolutely do not want others to go beyond with you? Or do you always pass on to other things with a shake of your head and say to yourself that all things considered "everyone has their own character?" Do you let your boss insult you or shout strong words at you? Do you let anyone make funny quips (for him but not for you!) or pull your leg in public?

Fine, from now on instead you must clearly define your insurmountable limits, and what is more from now on you are not going to let anyone violate them!

But to do this you must also define standards for your conduct, standards that you yourself will strive to follow. Only if you do this will you know that you have the strength never to be able to accept that others humiliate you.

What are the standards that you define for yourself?

For instance to always eat food that gives you energy, or never give advice unless it is asked for, or, at work, to try always to give

constructive feedback to people.

Fix standards for yourself, respect them and every three months revise them adding new ones that allow you to go on improving all the time. But what should you do if someone trespasses on your limits? The best thing is to keep calm and clarify in a calm and decisive way with the person that he/she will not be able to do what he/she has done ever again in the future.

Tell him/her straight away, don't lose your temper, tell him/her more than once if the person continues to behave in that way. And if he/she does not understand, break off the relationship. It will be difficult. But this will strengthen you even more.

Then you will realise that a strange thing is happening. If you know how to create this new awareness inside yourself, other people will perceive it.

And it will happen ever more rarely that someone tries to not respect your new limits.

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are the insurmountable limits that no one must ever pass with you? Are you able to define them in detail and respect them at all cost?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Don't let others guide you

Take the course opposite to custom and you will almost always do well.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

We all need social approval.

When we are uncertain about what to do we seek approval by **looking at what the people around us are doing**.

This is a harsh reality, but it is reality. We think we are strong, independent and not impressionable. But unfortunately that is not true.

What is social approval?

The principle that underlies it is very simple, but also very powerful: **one of the means that we use to decide what is right** and to try to discover what others consider right, what the majority considers right.

The principle is especially valid in determining what the correct behaviour is for a given situation: one goes from what to order in a restaurant to the speed to drive at on a motorway. The actions of those close to us have considerable importance in the decisions that we will have to take. We tend to consider an action more suitable when others do the same. As a rule, we commit fewer mistakes acting in accordance with social evidence. But when these decisions are what we want?

Who drives our desires? Us or someone else?

Several studies have showed that is sufficient, during a telephone sale, to change the sentence:

“Our telephone operators are waiting for your call” to “If the operators are busy, please call back” to considerably increase sales. Social approval powerfully influences our actions.

That is why it is so important to have testimonials who tell us how satisfied they are with a service or product. **We need social approval.**

The principle also works the other way round, **that is people tend to adjust to what others are doing, even when what the others are doing is negative.** Therefore, if most people arrive late in the office, even those who arrive on time will tend to adjust to the norm.

DIARY OF CHANGE

The law of social approval may be used to your advantage in different ways, in business and in your personal life, but above all knowing it is a useful tool for you to ask yourself how much of what you are doing is truly in line with your principles or values or rather how much is nothing but an “alignment” with what most people are doing. Are you self-directed or hetero-directed? In normal or critical situations, how much are you able to reason with your head and how much instead do you conform to those who are close to you? Do you take decisions based on your values or on those of others? How important is social approval for you?

Know your “criteria of success”

The significance of a man is not in what he attains but in what he longs to attain.

Kahlil Gibran

Our “criteria of success” are nothing but the things that have to happen so that we “feel” that our needs have been satisfied.

It is fundamental to know these criteria because in effect it is them which “trigger” in us the “satisfaction factor”, or on the contrary prevent us from being satisfied in a systematic way. Let’s look at an example.

If your criterion to know that you are successful at work is: *“doing everything in a perfect way with no mistakes, without ever creating conflict and always keeping my collaborators happy”*.

You have criteria of success for work that are really “excellent” but also very difficult to realise! In other words you have a good strategy for being constantly dissatisfied (even though dissatisfaction, if creative, has numerous advantages).

Most of the conflicts that we live are conflicts relative to our “criteria of success”.

Take for instance our conflicts with our partner; most are born because we think that these criteria have been violated, or that they have not been taken into consideration.

“Yesterday we quarrelled because when I got home tired and wanted

to let of steam, he just wanted to watch television... and anyone who doesn't listen, doesn't love (criterion of love)".

This is why understanding our criteria at work and in our private lives is so important... on the one hand it is a way of "triggering" more often our thermostat of satisfaction (if our criteria are criteria that can in some way be reached), but also a way of understanding what we expect from the most frequent interactions that we have, what has to happen so that other people satisfy these criteria (and we theirs).

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are the criteria have to be satisfied so that you know you are successful at work? And in your private life?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

What are the criteria of success that other people must satisfy so that you feel loved? Understood?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Once the most important criteria have been defined, share them with the people close to you! Often, without knowing it, they think they have already satisfied your criteria of success, when instead, they are often satisfying only theirs!

Define an hour of success

Life is measured by works and not by days.

Pietro Metastasio

Focus, Focus, Focus!!!!

How is it possible in today's life to reflect, think, meditate, plan and organise. When our days are so full of commitments that at times finding 10 minutes for ourselves seems impossible?

Yet, we all know that the best way to have a life full of satisfaction is exactly that of knowing clearly what we want, being focussed and best organising ourselves so as to reach it. Something very different from being dragged along by events! Unfortunately ever more frequently this is what happens in the chaotic lives that most of us lead.

For this reason we have to seek a moment in the day when we can cut out a space all for ourselves, let's call it our "hour of success", which allows us to re-focus each day, to think of our strategies of success and of how to organise ourselves best to reach our objectives.

When? The best moment is surely in the morning, before starting the day, before the "world outside" has woken up, to be sure that it will be a moment all to ourselves and only for us.

We will fill this hour with all that allows us to be motivated, energetic, as clear and incisive as a laser beam, and to know what we want from our day and how to reach it in the most efficient way possible.

This is the routine that I suggest you follow:

1. 20 minutes of stretching exercises, yoga and exercises with elastic bands (personally I advise the five Tibetan ones for stretching);
2. 20 minutes of meditation and visualisation of your "ideal life" and your "mission";
3. 20 minutes to:
 - a. answer the empowering questions;
 - b. read the priority objectives for the year;
 - c. define the planning of the week and of the day, with the three priority objectives for the day;
 - d. define the key area of improvement for the day;

DIARY OF CHANGE

Do you dedicate a space in your day to think of the future, focus on the important things and define a strategy for success? It's important to wake up every morning with some strong positive feelings that we can then "bring" to our day.

From this point of view it's important to start the day asking yourself the right questions:

- **What can I be happy about today?**
- **For what am I grateful today? How can I make today "unforgettable"?**
- **What can I contribute to?**
- **Who am I going to send my positive energy of health, happiness and success to today?**
- **Reading my objectives and knowing that they will be reached, what are the 3 things that I must do today so that they show in my life?**

Simplify, simplify, simplify!

I am avaricious of that liberty that disappears as soon as the excess of assets begins.

Albert Camus

Our life's aim should not be to accumulate and/or complicate, but, on the contrary, a continual **search for simplification**.

In a world that wants and asks us for more and more, **simplifying our life means, instead, enhancing it**.

Simplification should concern all levels of our life, starting from things, eliminating all the superfluous and all that has not been used in the last year (we tend to use just 20% of the things that we have and they are those that we truly like).

Simplify your time, eliminating everything that does not bring you closer to your objectives and does not help you to grow, simplify your health, trying to eat in the simplest and healthiest way possible. Finally, simplify your mental processes, trying, always and where possible, to eliminate all the tensions, stress and useless "superstructures".

DIARY OF CHANGE

From today, in every situation, ask yourselves this question: how can I simplify? Start from small things.

Decide today to eliminate one THING every day; it might be an article of clothing, a book or anything else that you feel you no longer need or no longer use. Throw or give it away.

Wherever you are, create relationships

There is only one true luxury, and it is that of human relationships.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Recently a banal episode happened to me, which confirmed the importance of relationships. I was away on holiday in Malaysia when I received a telephone call from one of my neighbours to tell me, with a voice now broken by tears, that water was coming out from under my apartment door (his apartment, poor man, was right below mine). What could I do from 10,000km away? We had just moved and didn't know anyone and what is more it was August 14th!!

Luckily the week before I had met a nice, white-haired lady on the stairs and we had stopped to talk for a few minutes. We had created a **relationship of trust**. Just after receiving the call I phoned my "new friend" sure that if she were at home, she would help me. And so she did.

It is said that only 50% of expenses for advertising works. The problem is that we don't know which 50% it is. With relationships it's the same thing. You never know which relationship could be useful to you in the future. For this reason you must manage to create as many as possible, in your private life, at work, in every situation.

A dear Chinese friend, who came to Italy for work, at the exit from the trade fair, in the (very Italian) long queue to take a taxi started to speak to the person in front of him: he was an Australian who was looking for a new type of products to distribute in Australia. Exactly the products that my friend produced in China! Was this by chance? Perhaps. Capacity to seize opportunities? Certainly. If you don't have

this mental attitude, don't complain. It means that you have had dozens of opportunities pass before your nose as big as trains and you haven't even seen them...

Do you already know the **theory of the six degrees of separation**? This is a hypothesis according to which any person may be connected to any other through a chain of acquaintances with not more than 5 intermediaries. This theory was proposed for the first time in 1929 by the Hungarian writer Frigyes Karinthy.

In 2001 Duncan Watts, professor at Columbia University, took up the research for himself and recreated the experiment on the Internet. Watts used an e-mail message as the "parcel" that had to be delivered and, surprisingly, after having analysed the data obtained from the sending carried out by 48,000 different people resident in 157 different states, with regard to 19 "objectives", Watts found that the average number of intermediaries was effectively six.

Do you know what that means? With the right number of relationships you can reach practically any person in the world!

DIARY OF CHANGE

Have you got a list of your contacts that you update and "keep alive" constantly? Do you try to exploit every occasion to meet new people? Draw up a list of contacts that might be useful to you at work, choose the most influential person from the list and make sure that you stay constantly in contact with them with telephone calls, e-mails, cards and greetings. Try every time that you can to help them with something, even something small.

A “perfect life” is not your life

*Do not grieve over what you were
unable to do, regret only when
you could have and didn't want to.*

Mao Tse-tung

They have accustomed us since we were children...parents, grandparents, relatives, catechists, friends...

Everyone telling us: be good at school, go to church on Sunday, get your high school diploma, enrol in university, graduate with the maximum score, find a good job as an employee, which will give you the security to be able to have a family, find a good girl, marry her, have kids, make sure they study, find a good job..etc..etc....

I have nothing against this “**perfect life**”, on the contrary, a society like this is very reassuring.

It's a pity though that it's not a happy society.

If you are looking for a “**perfect life**”, you need to know that you are unlikely to be happy. Why? Because a “**perfect life**” cannot follow your uniqueness, your passions or your potentialities. Unless you believe that we all have the same gifts, potentiality and uniqueness.

Therefore, I am personally always suspicious of those who correspond to the stereotype of the “**perfect life**” in all its parts. There is something fake in this, something phony.

If your life corresponds 100% to a “**perfect life**”, start by asking yourself whether this life is your choice or someone else's, if the job

that gives you security give you also satisfaction, if the town where you live (because a **"perfect life"** foresees that it is always a good thing not to move too far away from your roots) gives you the experiences that you are looking for, so whether in this life you are in the driving seat, or the stereotype of the **"perfect life"**.

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are the things that you do because you feel that you need to be aligned with a "stereotype" that others see in you? What are the things that you do because "that's the way it has to be done"? In what areas of your life do you feel that you're not spontaneous but you're living following certain "canons" that are not yours?

1

2

3

Define your values

We know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Living according to our scale of values is fundamental to keep alignment and integrity.

On the contrary not respecting our own values makes us lose our interior unity and our being is as if it were being “pulled” in different directions by opposing forces.

Our being has deep set values that we would like respected, but decisions taken without respecting them (the fastest route) have as their result the fact that it is more and more difficult to make decisions. What a paradox!

That is why it is so important to have our guiding values clear.

But in actual fact what are our values? Values represent what is important for us; they are what we naturally define as “right”. Naturally not all values are on the same level, each one of us has certain values that he feels most important, and furthermore values can change during a lifetime.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Define your desired values. Answer the following question. What is truly important for you?

1

2

3

What are the values that you wish to follow in your life that make you feel good?

1

2

3

Hence you have defined your desired values.
Now place them in order of importance.

1

2

3

Do they make you feel good when you read them? If that's not the case, read them through again and revise them.

Are they aligned with your previously defined mission? Are there any that would “move you away” from your mission? Or any that are missing in order to be coherent with it?

Now answer this question. If you think of the biggest decisions that you have taken in recent years (job, family, etc..) by what values were they inspired?

If you had to define the 3 values that best represent your life today, what would you say?

Now you have defined your effective values.

Do you see any differences between your desired values and your effective values?

Your credibility is the most important thing you have

The reward of one duty is the power to fulfil another.

George Eliot

I want to speak about credibility because this simple, often forgotten word can truly make the difference in your life.

Your credibility will be the key to your success in all the areas of your life.

Here is how “credibility” is defined by the Treccani (Italy’s leading) dictionary:

“The capacity that a person, and especially a politician, a personality from the financial world, or even a body, a company, a government, has to inspire trust”.

The root of the word “credibility” is **credo... io credo (I believe). Io credo in te: “I believe in you”**

Thus credibility means inspiring trust. The most important thing if you want to have healthy relationships, if you want to have success in your work, to be respected and a leader.

Credibility is built with a lot of small things. Sincerity, punctuality, respect for yourself and for others, the way that you dress (yes, dear friends, that is also important... depending on the objectives that you wish to set yourselves).

Credibility is built by being “**honest**” and “**authentic**” i.e. by defining values that will never be violated for any reason whatsoever; being coherent with them. Even when no one is watching you.

Enhancing your skills, in the field in which you want to be recognised as “credible”.

Being the best in your field: studying, updating, and dedicating at least 1 hour a day to this process of continuous improvement.

Being professional. Communicating with clarity and keeping your promises.

Credibility is not obtained, credibility has to be EARNED.

To give you an idea of how important credibility is, let’s think of its opposite. Know what it is?? **Suspicion.**

Would you become friends with a person that you are suspicious of? Would you become a business partner of a person that you don’t trust? Would you buy something from a person that you don’t think credible?

Not only is credibility made from a lot of small and large things but at the same time **there are no short cuts to credibility.** It must be created over time; it is a “bank account” of trust into which it is always necessary to make deposits. For sure, mistakes can be made, but these will be accepted only if the credit of the trust that we have “paid into” the account is high.

There are no techniques, only the daily building of your own credibility with your children, your family and colleagues. The fruits and the interest that will arrive from these deposits will be extremely high.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Who are the people that you trust? What do you admire in them? Why do you see them as “credible”?

From now on, set yourself the objective of only making promises if you are sure that you can keep them. From today, dedicate at least 1 hour a day to improvement in the field in which you would like others to see you as “credible”. Decide on the time now!

Live with “rhythm”

Events follow one another like days

Maasai Proverb

What does “live with rhythm” mean?

Easy, living with rhythm means that if you wish to obtain results, you must always be ready to change, ready to challenge yourself to improve, ready to put yourself under pressure.

So your life will certainly be very different from that of all your friends who look for tranquillity, a safe haven, who want certainties.

In your life of continuous change, however, you will have to be able to create a “rhythm”, have the discipline that will allow you to reach the results that you aspire to.

I’d like to give you an example: if your objective is to be in better physical shape, you have to create a plan of action. Let’s imagine that your action plan is to go to the gym 3 times a week. It would be a mistaken strategy to do it “on the off chance”; that would mean missing your goal miserably in a short time. Create a rhythm. Decide to go to the gym on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 7 to 9 in the morning and **STICK TO IT**. Don’t make excuses for yourself if one morning you feel tired. Follow your rhythm. Do you want to learn a new language? Create a rhythm. Each day do you want to revise your objectives? Don’t do it by chance. Create a rhythm.

Either you are able to create some routines in a life that seeks change or you will never manage to reach your objectives.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Have you defined a routine for success i.e. a coherent monthly, weekly and daily plan of action to reach your most important objectives? Are you disciplined about sticking to this routine? In your weekly diary fix all the "recurring" activities referred to your main objectives for each area of power. What are or would you like these activities to be? If your goal is to learn a language, fix this activity every evening from 7 to 8, for instance, and stick to this timetable. Arrange to do so for several days in succession until you have created your "rhythm", until your recurring activities have become normal and part of your routine.

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power "Body/Health and Vitality":

1

2

3

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power "Family":

1

2

3

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power “Material assets”:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power “Personal development”:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power “Social Life, friends and leisure”:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power “Work/ Career”:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power “Finances & Investments”:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Your weekly recurring activities in the area of power “Contribution to the world”:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Take decisions in the right way

*It's in your moments of decision
that your destiny is shaped.*

Anthony Robbins

Making successful decisions is clearly a fundamental capacity, in that the closer we get to our goals, the more we find ourselves in the situation of having to make a lot of decisions, and very crucial ones.

I don't think that you can underestimate the importance of intuition in decision making, what we commonly call "gut feelings". Often they tell us a lot more than complicated rational calculations. Our sixth sense may be essential to taking decisions aligned with our values.

However, a good "rational method" may be a very effective ally for intuition.

Here is a simple process that I advise you to follow when you have to make an important decision. Write it all down on a sheet of paper:

1. write a list of everything that you want to obtain from your decision;
2. think of the worst result that could occur with your decision;
3. consider the impact of your decision on the people close to you;
4. transform all the evaluations written above into brief objectives of what you want to get with your decision; answer the question "in taking this decision what objectives do I want to reach?";
5. once you have defined your objectives ask yourself the question "how?; how can I reach these objectives?" and look for all the possible alternatives to your decision, or all the possible variations to your decision;

6. project yourself into the future, and for each alternative, give a score from 1 to 10 for each objective defined in point 4;
7. eliminate all the alternatives with the lowest scores and leave only the 3 with the highest scores;
8. now, of the 3 remaining alternatives gather all the information that you can in detail, read, talk to people who have already made the same decision, do everything possible to have a clear situation of the 3 alternatives;
9. project yourself into the future with all the new information that you have;
10. live the 3 alternatives in the future and define the one that best corresponds to your objectives.

The only life you have is in the present

Live for the present, dream of the future, learn from the past.

Anonymous

Living in the present is the most difficult thing to do: not by chance it takes years of meditation to manage to do it. Our mind always tends to live either in the past or in the future, and this causes anxiety, stress and worry.

This is what Eckhart Tolle writes in his book "The Power of Now":

"All of us live most of the time "unaware". Of course we are able to think and act, but we do it under the influx of those hundreds of thoughts that constantly echo in our minds. How many of you at this moment are paying attention to your breathing? Probably nobody, and yet that is what we do continuously and that keeps us alive; try now and again during your usually frenetic day, to breathe deeply and to be totally present and conscious during that breath. Bring all your attention to it, all your being, without judging, accepting any sensation that emerges. Try to always do this again and again during the day and a profound change will take place in you..."

We have seen that there is a strong positive charge in visualisation of the future.

However, I would like to draw your attention to a mistake that we all make, which, given its absurdity, is absolutely useless.

I want to introduce you to this trap with an example that happened to me just last week. I had read about a special offer in a bookshop in my town regarding some books about art "while stocks last". As soon as possible I rushed to the shop and when I was standing in front of the

shop assistant, I heard her reply in this way...

" ahhhhhhh, but **you should have come yesterday**, we haven't got any left!"

"You should have come yesterday?????"

What does it mean YOU SHOULD HAVE COME YESTERDAY?

How is it possible TODAY to ought to have arrived YESTERDAY? Have they invented a time machine and nobody told me? Why do we always tend to think in terms of "missing"?

I hope that this example is clear. I hope that you will rapidly stop thinking today of what you could have done yesterday. I'm sorry but it's useless!

Use your energy for something more constructive!

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are your thoughts that tie you to the past? The regrets or remorse that you prefer to bring with you and that divert you from your future objectives?

Decide, from now on, to live in the present and to plan your future. Let the past go and with that take back all the energy that you spend today thinking about what "should have happened".

Develop a “workaholic” mindset

Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day in your life.

Confucius

Recently several books have come out about the power of manifesting wealth through visualisation in the sitting room of your own home.

Very nice... you are sitting in your sitting room at home, you visualise a Ferrari all day, between one nap and another, and usually in the space of a week or two, and it is delivered to your doorstep.

Do you know many people this has happened to?

Me no, for a very simple reason, that these books forget to tell you something important. **The most successful people work hard.**

- They work more than others;
- they get to the office earlier and leave later;
- they invest in continuous growth;
- they work at least 50/60 hours a week;
- often in the evenings and at weekends;
- they have developed the “hard work” mindset.

When they go to work, they work. They don't chat; they don't waste time surfing the internet or reading the newspaper. They work. They know that other people are their major source of time wasting. People with no future who want to take it away from them too, and they don't get distracted. The concept of “work addict” cannot in reality be negative if, as we said, you manage to keep a balance in the different areas of your life and you love what you do. **Once again the key is to reason by objectives!**

Free yourself from negative people

Surround yourself with talented people.

Russell Simmons

It takes a lot of self confidence to take this decision that can literally change your life:

free yourself from negative people!

Don't associate with negative people, don't seek them as friends and don't do business with them.

When you free your life of all the negative people, an extraordinary thing happens: the free space left by all the negative people fills up, inevitably, by positive people!

DIARY OF CHANGE

Create what is called a "master mind group" that is a group of positive people similar to you that you can compare with. Decide who are the 5/6 most successful people that you know and decide to meet them once a week or even once a month. Discuss your problems, objectives and what you have read with them. Remember that if you have an objective, there is always someone who has reached that objective before you; if you have a problem, there is always someone who has solved that problem before you!

Elude emotional blackmail

*I prefer hate that respects me
to love that insults me.*

Giuseppe Rovani

In everyday life, and especially in interaction with the people closest to us, we suffer emotional blackmail in an involuntary, but much more often voluntary, way.

It's easy to recognise emotional blackmail: we are told "if you don't do what I'm asking, I'll make you pay for it". Obviously emotional blackmail is never so clear, but certainly it has an effect: it generates fear and a sense of guilt in us.

The people who emotionally blackmail us usually know us well and they play on the fear that we have of losing the relationship, they play on our sense of duty: the "blackmailer" knows that the relationship is important to us; he knows not only that losing it is almost unbearable for us, but also that **we want to go on being loved and esteemed by him.**

It is often easy for him to tell us that if we don't do what he is asking us to do, we are avid, contemptible and heartless.

Susan Forward distinguishes four categories of emotional blackmailers: it's important to know them well to recognise them and try to elude them:

- punishers, are those who clearly make us understand that if we don't do what they ask us to do, we will face negative consequences. It's, for instance, the boss who tells us that if we don't do more overtime, we won't be promoted;

- self-punishers: these are the most deceitful category because they stir our feelings of compassion towards them. A typical example is the person who says to his/her partner “if you leave me, I will kill myself!!!...”;
- sufferers: very similar to the self-punishers, they make us understand that they are the victims and that we are the torturers who make them suffer, or rather, will make them suffer if we don't do what they want;
- tantalisers: instead blackmail us by promising something: love, money and happiness, except for then telling us that they will take it away if we don't do what they are asking.

Emotional blackmail has the characteristic of making us feel bad not towards the blackmailer, but towards ourselves. Often it leaves us disorientated and makes us angry, because in the end we decide to do something that, often, does not correspond to our deepest needs but rather to the needs of the blackmailer.

Furthermore, when the blackmailing is frequent, we often realise that we are being blackmailed but not only do we not manage to tackle it but we don't even manage to make our blackmailer feel guilty.

Victims of emotional blackmail have certain shared features:

- need for approval;
- fear of conflict;
- taking care of other people's well being;
- giving up their own well-being so as not to make others suffer.

How can you fight emotional blackmailers?

First and foremost it's important to recognise that we are dealing with emotional blackmail, after that it's necessary to clarify what we want from the relationship, even being ready to lose it so long as we state that we no longer want to play that game.

Remember, for emotional blackmail to work, it takes two!

Avoid emotional blackmail like the plague: every time that we give in to emotional blackmail we are undermining our integrity, we are putting our needs in second place, we are undermining the relationship which, just by accepting the emotional blackmail, we would like to save.

Remember that a knife can't cut itself

*A knife can cut many things
but it can't cut itself, because it is itself.*

Anonymous

There are situations in which we have to face challenges or crises, which seem bigger than us.

There are moments in which, even though we think we are "equipped", we need to ask for help from someone "outside us".

It may be a friend, a therapist, a person that we trust...

We have to remember that "a knife cannot cut itself" i.e. in certain cases we need outside, objective help.

Why is it so difficult to think of asking for help?

There are many reasons. Asking for help means having to admit that you can't manage alone, it means more simply admitting to yourself that you have a problem of being **fallible**.

If you have to ask for help from a professional, for instance from a psychologist, you are afraid of what people will say, of being considered **mad**.

It goes without saying that this is all rubbish. Once again, the reason is simple, a knife cannot cut itself. When you have a physical problem, you see a doctor, don't you? And what is a doctor if not an expert on illnesses?

Therefore, if you have a psychological problem that you cannot solve on your own, a deep suffering, why not ask for help from an expert of this type of problems?

This is what the psychologist Barbara Rossi writes:

“Suffering” becomes pathological when it is not used to change. The capacity to change is the best index of good health and it can be measured in two ways: by trying to reach your objectives in a different way when they are hampered or by giving them up. Undoubtedly there is something that doesn’t work if over time you do not manage to find the way to obtain what you aspire to, or if you go on aspiring to what you cannot manage to obtain, or if the “emotional price that you pay” to obtain something important is always too high. Understanding in what way your own states of mind are connected with situations that you are going through in general is very useful to attaining a certain level of personal fulfilment and well-being... Thus the myth that only those who are mad go to the psychologist is dispelled and, on the contrary, just those who do not wish to “go mad”, after having overcome 1000 doubts, in the end manage to get help, and when they manage, they are already on the right road to being well”.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Look for a “coach”, a person who can follow you in a process of improvement and change, a “trainer for success”. It might be your best investment!

Apply the 80/20 rule

*20% of efforts produce
80% of results.*

Vilfredo Pareto

There are few rules that can change your life like the 80/20 rule.

This rule, known as the “Pareto principle”, establishes that:

- 20% of inputs generate 80% of outputs;
- 20% of causes generate 80% of consequences;
- but above all that 20% of efforts generate 80% of results.

This rule can be applied to innumerable fields: from business, where one is used to finding that 80% of profits are generated by 20% of the customers, to wealth (as we know a small part of the population owns most wealth), and on to **personal organisation**.

It is here that the rule can generate the most extraordinary results.

What I would like is that you begin to think with the 80/20 mindset. This mindset means that, each time that you have to decide how to use your time, every time that you have to define the actions to reach your goals, every time that you have to redefine the difference that makes the difference for you, abandon the common way of thinking, that asks you to do more, to work more, to get agitated, and pass to the non-linear, almost hedonistic, thinking of the 80/20 rule.

Therefore, always think about what the actions will be, and only those, that if applied will let you obtain **great changes** in your life.

Always think about what is NOT necessary to do (80% of actions that

lead to 20% of results) and concentrate instead on the 20% that **make the difference**.

Finally, a thought. The 80/20 rule tells us that 80% of our happiness is obtained with 20% of our actions. Do we clearly know what this 20% is? Are we trying to increase this 20% seeking to be happier?

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are the 3 things in your personal life and at work that only you can do and that if you do them with continuity, can lead to dramatic results in your life and in your organisation?

1

2

3

Don't let things own you

*When the last tree has been cut down,
the last fish eaten,
and the last stream poisoned,
then you will realise that you cannot eat money.*

Indian Proverb

Following this rule will allow you to do what you like, to discover your gift and to live to the fullest.

When you know what you want, you have fun doing it, you certainly reach results. And money.

Despite this the **"don't let things own you"** must remain a principle to always follow. **Only in this way can you be free.** Only in this way will it be you who commands the system, and not the system that commands you. We live in a society that is dazzling us with new gadgets, cars that are more and more attractive and powerful, clothes that are more and more fashionable. A society that, just because of its overproduction, is self-destroying.

In the end we are all more and more equal, and more dissatisfied. How is it possible that your salary increases, doubles, triples, but it's more and more difficult to make ends meet? Every month most people have instalments to pay on their cars, mortgages on their houses, and on their second homes, subscriptions to internet and satellite TV. They think they are "well off" but in reality they are only slaves of the system. They have no choice.

They are possessed by things and by a desire for the same things.

If they have a problem at work tomorrow, they will not be able to resign to look for a new one, and at the same time they will not be able to take up new opportunities. The risk will be too great for them. So they will go on living dissatisfied and unhappy, only because every month they have to pay for their satellite TV or a "bigger and better" car. What a great exchange!!!

The system pushes us, hypnotises us in this "loop", a circle that it is more and more difficult to get out of.

Living without being owned by things does not mean not allowing yourself luxuries, not loving or purchasing beautiful things, which we love, objects that we live as ours, to which we are able to give profound significance, and that therefore we do not "consume". (Do you perhaps like the word "consumer"? I don't!) It only means not being a victim of the system; it means always placing your own freedom before everything else, especially before things. It means owning things not being owned by them.

Give significance to the things that you buy, be free, don't be a slave to what you have. Control the system, don't let it control you!

DIARY OF CHANGE

From today, when you feel the need to buy something, ask yourself: is it worth it? Is it better than something that I already have? Is it of suitable quality? The best quality? Am I preferring the quality of a few things to the quantity of a lot of poor things? If I let this thing enter my life, what must I put out?

Live a real life

*Open your eyes, look within.
Are you satisfied with the life you're living?*

Bob Marley

More and more today we tend to live our experiences through a television screen, a computer or a written page.

We think we are living real experiences, sharing those experiences with others but in reality we are alone and we are not living a real life. Our senses are 'useless' because in effect the only sense that we use is sight.

This causes different problems. First of all, the missing real involvement of our senses pushes us never to stop, not to have any type of self-regulation that otherwise we would have if we were truly living that situation. If we are on the internet and we see a violent scene, most times we are not driven to stop but to look for stronger and stronger stimulations. If we were living that situation we would instead be pushed to pull out immediately, to bring a defence mechanism into act which does not function if that scene is watched on a computer, protected by the domestic walls of our home.

That is why it is so important instead to have real experiences, not artificial ones, to have true relationships, not to isolate oneself behind a computer screen.

And to do this we must learn once again to use ALL our senses: not just sight, but also touch, hearing, smell and taste. Living true relationships, not those through a nickname on Facebook!

Take back ownership of your body through movement and breathing!
Immerse your body in natural elements, learn to taste food and to enjoy the taste of life.

Switch off the computer. Go out and live!

Arrange it so that the only "tweeting" that you know is the one of the birds!

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are the 3 activities that you can undertake from today that will help you to make contact with your "senses" and nature?

1

2

3

Apply the zero, five, thirty principle

*Look after your body,
it's the only place that you can live.*

Anonymous

Yet once again we could speak for hundreds of pages on the topic of health, but in this case too I'd like to keep it simple. I'll give you an easy but very effective rule. Try it for 30 days and you'll see results right away!

Zero: cigarettes, alcohol. They activate very strong inflammatory phenomena

Five: portions of fruit and vegetables per day, at least

Thirty: minutes of sport that we must do at least every day

Simple, isn't it? Let's try to go a little deeper with each of these points. On zero cigarettes and alcohol there is little to say. Anyone who has not yet understood (despite the advertising) that they are bad for you... will certainly not be persuaded by me.

Food: reduce eating meat (this too causes inflammatory phenomena), dairy products and pasta to the minimum... and try instead to follow the rule of the five portions of fruit and vegetables (they have positive effects on the immunitary cells of first defence). Abound with juices (apple and carrot have a great disintoxicating effect), drink a lot of water and above all **try to eat very little**. All the recent studies show that we eat a lot more than necessary and that too much food "intoxicates" us; so try to eat very little, you'll be astonished by the effects that this will have on your energy.

Finally, our nervous system and immune system are closely linked and

it has also been shown that in case of stress susceptibility to infections increases and the healing of wounds slows down.

Keeping stress under control therefore becomes essential also for our health and to slow down ageing.

As regards the thirty minutes of sport, I know that it may seem difficult to apply every day, but you can create a very simple but very effective routine: 10 minutes of stretching exercises (I recommend the five Tibetan ones, you can find more information on the internet where you will also find a lot of learning videos) and 20 minutes of exercises with coloured elastic bands; in this case too you will find all the information on the internet. The nice thing about this portable equipment is that it lets you do light exercise, wherever you are (it weighs just a few grams and are easy to pack in a suitcase) and it involves the whole body. Finally, my advice is in any case to do an aerobic exercise 2/3 times a week.

The only way to get ahead is not to think about getting ahead

*The only way to do great work is to love what you do.
If you haven't found it yet, keep looking.
Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart,
you'll know when you find it.
And, like any great relationship,
it just gets better and better as the years roll on.
So keep looking until you find it.*

Steve Jobs

I think that the great Jack Welch summarised in very few words the only way that you have today for getting ahead.

Always do something more than what you are asked for. The right word is:

“OVERDELIVER”

Understand what it is that the company and your boss want from you in terms of **RESULTS**.

Do it. And do even more.

Don't focus on the effort but on the results.

And always bring more than what was asked for. Don't think of other things, don't think of your career plans, politics or your salary.

“OVERDELIVER”

Simple.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Which are the 3 main results that your company expects from you?

1

2

3

What are 3 projects that you can undertake today at work, other than your daily work, that can give you visibility?

1

2

3

Your income can only grow in the measure in which you grow

You will always have only that wealth that you have given.

Marco Valerio Marziale

The motives for which we are (or aren't) able to bring money into our lives depend on deep-seated reasons, beliefs and models of thinking well rooted in us. For this it is possible to say that we will only be able to improve our financial situation if we are able to change our mental model of money!

The first way in which our "model of money" was programmed depends on the things that were said to us by the people close to us when we were young. Any of us who have had problems with money will remember lines of the type "the rich are bad" or "it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a **rich man to go to heaven**" or "playing the stock market is like playing roulette... you always lose!" These sentences have "sculpted" our beliefs about money, its importance and, its positive or negative connotations. A verbal conditioning that was accompanied by a *modelling* by the people who were closest to us (for instance our parents) and by how they saw, managed and placed themselves in terms of money.

Did your father come home every evening complaining how "all the bosses he had known were bloody-minded to him"? Then it will be difficult for you to become a good boss!!

The past together with particular "salient deeds" with a strong emotional impact that in turn have influenced our beliefs about money

have created our "model", software that programs us to behave in certain ways with respect to money. Are we "programmed" to reach the end of the month "with great difficulty"? All our attempts to earn more (or to spend less) will fail... we will get to the end of the month with no money!

Did we tell ourselves, since the time that we were kids, that when we were earning X euros a month that we would be happy? Fine. Having reached that figure, our money thermostat will block us and we will not be able to earn more! This is why, therefore, our capacity to accumulate money must first of all start from our capacity to "dismantle" this model of money and create a more successful one!

Starting by "telling ourselves" different things, different from those that the people close to us have been telling us the whole of our lives. Starting to have positive models, models that were able to create and to increase their wealth, and finally to have a series enhancing **beliefs about money**. That is what you have to work on every day.

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are your beliefs about money today? What does money mean to you and what do you think about rich people? Write it here:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

What are the new enhancing beliefs that you would like to have and that can help you to increase your wealth? Write at least three. Money in future for me will be:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Are you ambitious or are you content to have just a little money, just to get to the end of the month? Are you ready in the area of all that is honest and right to pay any price to reach wealth?

Develop the features of winners

*Nothing great was ever achieved
without enthusiasm.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

We've seen how your income will only grow in the measure in which you grow as people. In general successful people, also from a financial point of view, have certain features that distinguish them from the average, and that you can develop:

- they are positive;
- they seek opportunities in every situation, even negative ones;
- they also try to do more than what is required;
- they feel the urgency to "do" something;
- they are ready to swim against the current;
- they are ready to change their behaviour if they realise that the pathway chosen takes them away from their objectives instead of closer;
- they focus on the important things;
- they take risks and are courageous;
- they know that every decision, good or bad, is in any case better than no decision;
- they are disciplined to act when they know they have to.

DIARY OF CHANGE

Mediocre people concentrate equally on things that have great consequences and things that have small consequences. What are 3 things that have small consequences that you can stop doing?

1

2

3

Now 3 things that would have great positive consequences on your life and that you must start to do?

1

2

3

Appreciate others

*Maybe for the world you are just a person,
but for some person you are the whole world.*

Gabriel García Marquez

Our primary need is to feel secure.

Only if we feel secure can we then experiment.

Our sense of security depends profoundly on the experiences that we have had that have made us feel appreciated and people of value. In business, for instance, how we feel deeply influences our results. It's important to have clear and challenging objectives, and at the same time it's important to set objectives for our team that put us "in the flow", but all of this has to be done inside a framework in which we never miss a chance to appreciate others for their value.

This need to feel appreciated begins when we are born and goes on for the rest of our lives.

This is why it is so important to make children feel appreciated. "Your life will be a great success". These are the words that we should say to our children every day!

Without love and attention children tend to get depressed, they no longer revel in anything, they can get ill, they don't manage to learn as quickly as children who feel loved and appreciated. We are just the same.

What truly makes the difference for a person in the workplace? **Research shows that the real difference is the relationship with the boss. If we feel well considered and appreciated, everything**

changes. Our performance improves, we are happier and are prepared to stay at work longer.

Bosses who do nothing but criticise their collaborators are old-fashioned, found only in films; don't believe in it, it doesn't work.

DIARY OF CHANGE

From now on try to take every chance to say a word of appreciation for those closest to you, especially in your family and at work. Try to always see the best of others; you'll see that it's a prophecy that will start to come true. For you, they will give their best!

The force for continuous improvement

A professional (writer) is an amateur who didn't quit.

Richard Bach

There's a definition of innovation that I like a lot:

"create new knowledge or apply existing knowledge to improve"

I believe in improvement defined as "breakthrough" i.e. in taking, in one go, a great step towards change. Creating something new.

But experience shows us that change with a "great leap" is difficult to apply for most people.

Leaving one's own comfort zone is difficult as we know, but even taking a small step outside of it is really terrorising.

During the Second World War the Americans started to use a technique of quality improvement (later redefined by the Japanese as Kaizen) which is based instead on small improvements made a little at a time.

This is what Robert Maurer wrote in his book *"One small step can change your life"*

"All changes, even positive ones, frighten; often it is counterproductive to try to reach your goals with radical or revolutionary methods, because this increases the fear. The small steps of the Kaizen Way, instead, inhibit the reaction of fear in the brain and stimulate rational and creative thoughts."

A small improvement every day. A great objective broken down into many small targets that are easy to reach. The discipline of wanting to improve every day consistently.

If then the Kaizen Way is joined by the 80/20 strategy, the results can be extraordinary and obtained with little effort.

Fear of change can be a great braking force on our change.

The method of continuous improvement allows us to “release” this brake, to stay focussed on our objectives every day and to obtain lasting improvements in the long term with little effort.

DIARY OF CHANGE

What are the really important things to reach your objective?

How can you divide them into smaller objectives that allow you to improve every day?

And which of these small objectives are truly important? What are the 3 objectives for improvement that you can set yourself for each day?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Each week define an objective for improvement in your areas of personal development. Focus on that every day with the aim of doing something that will help you to improve yourself and move ahead.

Last Step: let it be

*He that can have patience
can have what he will.
Benjamin Franklin*

The second “step” in this book tells you that you have to take responsibility. We went as far as to say being responsible for EVERYTHING.

But this doesn’t mean that everything can change, that everything depends on us. Life, as we all know, is an adventure and like all adventures is full of surprises, changes and unforeseen events.

So ask yourself what you can really change and what you must instead leave be...

Keep this prayer with you always:

“God, give me grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things which should be changed, and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.”

(cf. Serenity Prayer Reinhold Niebuhr – Thomas More died in 1535)

In reading this book you have started out along a path. I hope that it is full of surprises, emotions and happiness. I wish you a successful future, wherever you are; you deserve it.



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THE PATH TO PERSONAL EXCELLENCE

**WHAT MATTERS IS NOT WHERE YOU START FROM
BUT WHERE YOU WANT TO GO!**

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*What is the difference is that makes the difference?
The 40 steps highlighted in this book are indeed
the secrets that can make a difference in your life
and the foundations to become an excellent professional.*

*This book is intended to be a practical guide,
full of exercises, schemes and suggestions that you
can apply straight away. If you are able to apply
the "steps" that you are about to learn in this book,
you will change your life drastically. You will see results
right from the start, and others will see you
as a different person.*